United Nations A/ES-10/PV.28

General Assembly
Tenth Emergency Special Session

Official Records

28th meeting
Friday, 17 November 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Resumption of the tenth emergency special session

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I declare the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, on illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, resumed. Members will recall that, in paragraph 8 of resolution A/ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, the General Assembly decided to adjourn the tenth emergency special session temporarily and to authorize the President of the General Assembly at its most recent session to resume its meeting upon request from Member States.

I should like to draw the attention of delegations to the following: document A/ES-10/366, which contains a letter dated 14 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, in which he requested, on behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, the resumption of the tenth emergency special session; and document A/ES-10/367, which contains a letter dated 15 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by which he conveys the support of the Non-Aligned Movement for the request for the resumption of the tenth emergency special session.

In accordance with rule 63 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the President and Vice-Presidents of the sixty-first session shall serve in the same capacity at the resumed tenth emergency special session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to decide that the Credentials Committee of the sixty-first session should serve for the resumed tenth emergency special session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In keeping with established practice, I should now like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/ES-10/368, concerning Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.19)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We are meeting today because of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the need to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is deteriorating daily, creating serious humanitarian problems and further exacerbating already serious

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political problems. The severe economic crisis endured by Palestinian society is growing worse, which in turns increases the complexity of the situation.

Consequently, we must condemn without distinction the killing of Palestinian and Israeli civilians because such arbitrary killings are contrary to the rules of international humanitarian law and to established legal norms. Here, we should recall that this dramatic escalation of violence and counter-violence has had disastrous consequences and a negative impact on the Palestinian and Israeli societies alike. It widens the gap between these two peoples, who live side by side.

We therefore consider that the only solution lies in a return to the negotiating table, for dialogue provides the only means of serving the interests of both parties in order to achieve the just peace that we all hope for. It is not only the two parties to the conflict that must return to the negotiating table; the international community must be represented as well, because the outcome will have an impact that transcends the geographical boundaries of the area of conflict. The situation calls for initiatives and solutions aimed at finding a genuine resolution of the crisis, beginning with an end to the cycle of violence. In the absence of effective solutions, that cycle of violence will continue.

The international community now knows that negotiations will result in a just, viable and lasting peace only if there is a serious plan that can meet the interests of both parties to the conflict and whose goal is a genuine peace based on respect for the rights of both peoples. The time has come for an end to the decades-long bloodshed in one of the most tense regions of the world. We all must face this serious challenge at this historic and critical stage.

We must work to ensure the success of the peace process between the Palestinian and Israeli parties, on the basis of the vision of two States living side by side in security and stability. That will open the way to peace throughout the Middle East region and will mark the beginning of a new life for the peoples of the region and for succeeding generations — generations for which a struggle based on force and violence will be replaced by another kind of struggle: a struggle towards security, stability, prosperity and progress.

I now give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Over the past four months, Israel, the occupying Power, has carried out a blatant campaign of aggression and ruthless military assaults against the Gaza Strip that continue to escalate before the eyes and ears of the entire world. Through that excessive and indiscriminate use of force, the occupying Power has perpetrated war crimes against Palestinian civilians. The latest such crime was the massacre of civilians near Beit Hanoun, where the Israeli occupying forces killed 82 Palestinians, among them 22 children, in the course of a six-day campaign of aggression. The aggression culminated in a heinous crime against an extended family as they slept in their homes, thinking they were not in harm's way. That took place the day after the occupying forces declared that their aggression against Beit Hanoun had ended.

On Wednesday, 8 November 2006, during the early dawn hours, the occupying forces shelled a residential neighbourhood in Beit Hanoun. Nineteen civilians were killed as a result of that shelling, 16 of whom were members of the Al-Athamneh family. Among the victims of that crime were seven children, an infant, a three-year old child and five women. Most of them were killed while they slept, and the rest while fleeing from the shells that fell over their heads from all directions.

The normal response to these highly abnormal circumstances, which constitute a grave threat to international peace and security and threaten a resurgence of violence in the entire region, is to have the Security Council uphold its main responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security. However, the Security Council failed to uphold its responsibilities due to the negative vote of one of its permanent members on a balanced draft resolution that condemned this criminal act and demanded an investigation into its circumstances. That was the second veto used by the same permanent member in less than four months, and it is the thirty-first veto used by that very member on draft resolutions related to the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The repeated use of the veto sends the wrong message to Israel, the occupying Power, namely, that it is above international law and that it can continue to commit crimes and acts of outright aggression with impunity. The repeated use of the veto also signals to the Palestinian people that the targeting

of civilians is legitimate and that it is overlooked by the Security Council because the perpetrator is Israel.

We meet today at the General Assembly's resumed tenth emergency special session in accordance with the "uniting for peace" formula in a last-resort effort to defend the principles on which the United Nations was founded. We are also here to allow Member States to do collectively what the Security Council was incapable of doing. Furthermore, today's meeting is aimed at defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of international law, which are the safeguards of the principles of humanity, and at sending the clear message that no State is above the law. Thus, what is required is to take serious and firm action in response to these crimes, especially the massacre in Beit Hanoun, and to put an end to this rampant Israeli campaign, which intends to destroy an entire people and any hope of reviving the peace process.

Based on what I have described, and in the belief that unilateral solutions can only lead to a deterioration and escalation of the conflict, the groups that initiated the convening of the Security Council — the Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference — requested the resumption of the tenth emergency special session to put their recommendations before the membership so that the necessary collective action can be taken. In that connection, allow me to convey our thanks and appreciation to you, Madam President, for your immediate response to our request to resume this important session. I would also like to emphasize that today's meeting is necessary to stop this Israeli military madness, which targets children during their sleep.

Since Israel's unilateral redeployment from the Gaza Strip, which it had occupied for 39 years, the occupying Power has never passed up an opportunity to refer to that step as a courageous act and a hard decision. However, had Israel's intentions been truly sincere and intended to further the cause of peace by opening a new chapter, it would have paved the way to ending the dreadful occupation, and the pain would not be as pervasive as it is. The real outcome of the redeployment from the Gaza Strip has been the exacerbation of the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people.

Since Israel's redeployment from the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian people have experienced a series of shocking war crimes and acts of collective punishment at the hands of the occupation. These actions have included continuous artillery shelling, assassinations and terrifying sonic booms, in addition to closures, sieges and the withholding of tax revenues. Those illegal acts have resulted in massive loss of life and property, to the extent that all international observers of the situation on the ground have described it as a humanitarian disaster. As I speak, Israel is continuing its State-sponsored terrorism and committing war crimes.

Israel, the occupying Power, has intensified its military aggression, which is now in its sixth year, by launching a new campaign of wide-scale aggression in the Gaza Strip. The campaign began on 25 June 2006, on the pretext of liberating a captured Israeli soldier. During that bloody aggression, the occupying Power committed a number of war crimes, using a wide array of weapons in an unbridled manner, including missiles fired from F-16 jet fighters and Apache helicopters, as well as tank shells and other field artillery, in addition to a wide range of internationally banned illegal weapons. Injuries from those weapons is undetectable by x-ray, and survivors are at risk of contracting leukaemia.

To date, there have been more than 450 Palestinian victims, including many children. During this period, the occupying forces have carried out more than 292 air raids, in addition to daily shelling, which have resulted in massive loss of life and wanton destruction. Also, 4,300 Palestinians have been martyred in the past six years at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces.

As if those crimes were not enough, the Israeli Government has expanded its aggression through the systematic and organized destruction of public infrastructure and personal property, thereby intensifying the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip. That destruction has targeted a number of main bridges, roads, the only power plant in Gaza, the electrical network and a number of sub-transformers. Those acts of aggression have had a negative impact on all aspects of life in the Gaza Strip, as the effect of electricity outages has been apparent in all areas of life. For example, the level of medical services provided by hospitals and clinics has declined significantly, and so has the daily provision of food

supplies and water; the sewage system too is now on the verge of collapse.

Along with all those destructive measures, Israel has imposed a suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip and has isolated it form the outside world, as exit from and entrance into Gaza has been forbidden. The Rafah crossing that links Gaza to the outside world has been closed for over three months. Roughly 1.4 million Gaza residents have not been allowed to leave or enter Gaza, even if it was to receive or follow up on urgent medical treatment. Israel has also banned the import through the Karni crossing of basic food and medical supplies, as that crossing is now closed for 71 per cent of working hours. In addition, the Beit Hanoun crossing has been totally closed since March 2006.

As if starving and killing the population were not enough, on direct orders from the Israeli Prime Minister as part of Israel's campaign of collective punishment against the residents of the Gaza Strip, Israeli occupying forces have now begun psychological warfare. Israeli air force jets have carried out nightly low altitude sorties over the Gaza Strip, through which they intentionally cause powerful sonic booms. The sole purpose of these sorties is to prevent residents from sleeping and to create a continuous sense of fear and anxiety, especially among children. In that regard, I must emphasize that the Israeli Government planned the timing of those aggressive attacks to undermine the tireless efforts of President Mahmoud Abbas to form a national unity government, as well as his simultaneous efforts to gain the release of the captured Israeli soldier and Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including elected Palestinian officials. It is important to remember that 10,000 Palestinians have been jailed or detained to date by the occupying Power, including over 388 children and 117 women, many of whom are being held arbitrarily and without trial.

Those are all facts that have been attested to by United Nations specialized agencies and special rapporteurs, as well as by non-governmental organizations well known for their impartiality and objectivity. On 8 November, UNICEF declared that 19 Palestinian children had been killed, and 300 other children injured, during the first 10 days of November. According to that agency, that horrific figure was enough to make November 2006 one of the bloodiest months for the children of Palestine. UNICEF also stated that 116 children had been killed this year alone, as compared to 52 last year. Furthermore, UNICEF figures show that 71 children had been killed during the Olmert-Peretz Administration.

According to Mr. Miloon Kothari, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing in the territories occupied since 1967, those acts and collective punishment are criminal acts. B'Tselem, the Israeli information centre for human rights in the occupied territories, has also accused the occupying authorities on many occasions of war crimes and collective punishment. Amnesty International has described Israeli actions in the recent aggression against the Gaza Strip, especially in Beit Hanoun, as having reckless disregard for Palestinian lives, and has called for those who have perpetuated those acts to be brought to justice.

The Palestinian leadership has long been aware of where that aggression was heading. President Mahmoud Abbas has sent several letters to the Security Council warning against the grave consequences of such continued Israeli aggression and the dangerous risk it poses to civilian lives. That is especially true because of the constant threat by Israeli officials to invade the Gaza Strip — borne out by the massing of the Israeli army on the borders of Gaza prior to the capture of the Israeli soldier, which Israel used as a pretext for its aggression. Further evidence to that pre-planned Israeli aggression is the vicious crime that took the lives of seven members of the Ghaliya family on 9 June 2006, which was followed by another attack on 13 June that killed a pregnant woman and her five- and six-year-old children.

What did the Security Council, the principal body of the international community responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, do? Nothing. Not even a statement of condemnation was issued. It has remained silent before all these Israeli violations. We have nevertheless continued to inform the Security Council about the latest dangerous developments on the ground. During the 30 days prior to the massacre at Beit Hanoun, our delegation repeatedly sent letters warning of the potential for this sort of event, until the catastrophe finally happened. We called for the convening of the Security Council so that it could shoulder its responsibility. But, as everyone here can attest, we were confronted by the veto.

We must recall that those actions are being carried out by an occupying Power that has no

sovereign rights over the occupied territory in question. We are talking about land that has been occupied for the past 39 years and to which the Geneva Conventions are applicable, as 24 Security Council resolutions have previously affirmed. In that connection, we have the right to ask about certain issues that deserve to be addressed. Are some victims less important than others? How does the Security Council deal with issues of less urgency while refusing to deal with what is happening in Palestine? How is such an appalling crime, committed by an occupying Power, passed over by the Security Council without it taking a position? How does the Security Council allow the principles of the Charter and other international norms and covenants adopted following the atrocities and crimes committed during the Second World War to be disregarded without any response? Is there one Security Council for the whole world and a special one for Israel? Is one member of the Security Council permitted to put aside the United Nations Charter and forget about the principles of international law and international humanitarian law? What are the consequences of those actions on the world order and on international relations? All these are serious questions that deserve an answer in order to preserve the United Nations and uphold international order, because it is obvious that the international order is going through a serious crisis.

The United Nations Charter entrusted the Security Council with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of all Member States. Yet, the Security Council has shockingly failed to uphold its responsibility vis-à-vis the question of Palestine.

What our people do not understand is the readiness of some to speedily condemn any action by Palestinians, irrespective of their right to resistance, including acts that are even unacceptable to Palestinians, such as the killing of Israeli civilians. Those same people memorize the names of Israeli victims, including the names of Israeli soldiers and the weapons that Palestinians use to attack them. At the same time, they are not ready to condemn internationally banned artillery shells or bombs that weigh over 200 kilograms and which are launched by F-16 fighter jets against densely populated civilian areas, killing many Palestinian civilians. Some States also try to hide behind the excuse of "balance", to shirk their responsibilities.

Our question to them is whether the situation on the ground is balanced. Is there a similarity between the aggressor and the victim of aggression, between the occupier and the occupied, between an army armed to the teeth with the most grotesque and diabolical weapons, and a people who have nothing to protect themselves with? What balance are they talking about? The balance that we know is balance that takes into account international law and norms and does not disrespect them. The balance we know preserves human dignity and the rights inscribed in all international covenants and instruments.

Those violations are taking place in the context of the policy of premeditated collective punishment being pursued by the Israeli Government against our people — a Government that has literally turned the Gaza Strip into a huge prison. Those policies are solely aimed at penalizing the civilian Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip, in grave violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, categorically states that "Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited". That article also states that "Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited". The Conventions also consider the targeting of civilians to be war crimes.

The circumstances surrounding the killing of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun dictate that the events there fall under the category of war crimes. Accordingly, we cannot accept the argument presented by Israel, the occupying Power, that the killings were unintentional. The argument by the Israeli army that it did not mean to kill civilians in Beit Hanoun is unacceptable and is nothing more than disingenuous lip service, which cannot excuse what happened. Furthermore, the apology that holds the victim responsible for his own death is unacceptable. The perpetrators of those acts should be brought to justice.

In accordance with The Hague Regulations, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the First Additional Protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the responsibility of parties under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, States have a clear responsibility vis-à-vis those who commit war crimes.

Before the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, we accuse the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, of committing war crimes against the Palestinian people. We also hold the Israeli Government responsible for other crimes committed by members of the Israeli occupation army, including the extrajudicial killing of five Palestinians in the village of Al-Yamun in the West Bank, which took place on 8 November 2006. In addition, in accordance with article 29 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, we hold the Israeli Government responsible for crimes committed by Israeli settlers in several parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

We underscore the clear responsibilities of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention under common article 1 and article 148 of the Convention. We call upon those Parties to issue indictments and to bring to justice those Israelis who have committed war crimes against the Palestinian people, including the Chief of Staff of the Israeli army and all the commanders of the Israeli military units involved.

The Assembly is meeting here today to take appropriate action by adopting the draft resolution before it. This meeting, and what it hopes to achieve, must be viewed as an achievement by all those who believe in the rule of law and who seek to uphold the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is a success for all those who respect the right of children and civilians to life and seek to preserve the choice of peace based on justice. We thank you in particular, Madam President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session, and we thank members in advance for their support.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank you, Madam President, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, for agreeing to our request to resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, to consider Israel's aggression in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem — especially following the latest escalation in acts of aggression in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of this month.

In response to that serious escalation, the Group of Arab States requested an emergency meeting of the Security Council and, following consultations with Council members, submitted a fair and balanced draft resolution (S/2006/878). But the Council failed to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The draft resolution never saw the light of day because one of the Council's permanent members used its veto power, in a repetition of the events of last July.

Consequently, and in accordance with the resolution adopted by Arab Foreign Ministers at their 12 November 2006 meeting in Cairo, the Group of Arab States has requested the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the Israeli aggression.

In a single week, the latest Israeli aggression has led to the deaths of dozens of Palestinian civilians and to hundreds of injuries in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It has destroyed numerous facilities vital to the Palestinian people, in grave violation of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. Specifically, the aggression is a clear and flagrant violation of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and contravenes relevant Security Council resolutions.

The consequences of Israel's military operations have affected most of the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Gaza has become a vast prison in which the people have been seriously deprived of their basic needs and their freedom of movement, leading to further deterioration of the already poor humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population.

The excessive and indiscriminate use of armed force and other illegal practices of the occupying forces — such as firing on Palestinian women during a peaceful demonstration in Beit Hanoun — prove that the military campaign has exceeded its declared objective and that it is part of Israel's policies of killing, suppression, intimidation and collective punishment against the Palestinian people. Israel's right to defend its citizens does not give it the right to resort to such illegal, inhumane and excessive practices, which only hinder opportunities to revive the peace process.

It is truly confounding that the international community should remain silent in the face of Israel's blatant aggression against defenceless Palestinians. That silence has only encouraged Israel to commit

further offences against the Palestinian people, culminating in the 8 November massacre of innocent civilians, committed in full view of the entire world, in which the occupation forces fired artillery shells on a residential neighbourhood, killing some 20 people and injuring more than 40, most of them innocent women and children. The massacre was condemned by the Human Rights Council in its resolution S-3/1, adopted on 15 November, in which it also decided to send a fact-finding mission to the region. We condemn that massacre, which continues the violations repeatedly committed by the occupying Power in the occupied Palestinian territories, which have killed more than 100 Palestinian children since the beginning of this year alone.

For this reason, the international community is called upon to act quickly in order to stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, to hold accountable those responsible for these crimes and to begin to take definitive and concrete steps to revive the stagnant Middle East peace process on all tracks, within the framework of the agreements reached to date and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the peace process, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The international community, as represented by the General Assembly, is called upon, after the Security Council's failure to address the Palestinian issue, to take concrete steps and to consider action to protect Palestinian civilians through an international mechanism for stemming Israel's aggression, ending the suffering of the Palestinian people, and ensuring a return to the negotiating table in order to reach the desired comprehensive settlement.

Allowing Israel to persevere in its disregard for international law and its flagrant defiance of the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the former Commission on Human Rights and the new Human Rights Council will result in a loss of credibility for the Organization and will intensify frustration and hopelessness to the detriment of peace and stability in the Middle East. The Security Council's failure last week to adopt a draft resolution condemning this flagrant Israeli aggression and calling for the protection of civilians and the resumption of the peace process obstructs the role of the Security Council in addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is also seen as a message that encourages Israel to take its aggression further, thereby increasing the level of tension and resulting in the continuation of the cycle of violence.

Therefore, the Group of Arab States has decided to submit to the General Assembly the fair and balanced draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.19. We call upon all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): Here we are again, with the same sense of déjà vu, with the terrorists accusing the victims and the General Assembly being yet again used, abused and hijacked so cynically. I listened carefully to the very long statement made by my Palestinian colleague. There was one word that was repeated again and again: that Palestinian mantra of "occupation", "occupying Power", "occupation", "occupying Power". I understand that it may be very difficult to be weaned away from those very convenient terms.

But let me remind my Palestinian colleague that 15 months ago Israel left Gaza; it did not occupy a single inch of Gaza; there has not been a single Israeli in Gaza. There was and is no occupation in Gaza. The only reason we are there is because the Palestinian Authority, which my Palestinian colleague represents, has chosen to turn Gaza into a terror base and a launching pad for missiles into Israel. But that word still features prominently in Palestinian speeches.

However, there is one word that is totally missing from that very, very long and tedious statement. And that word is also missing from the draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.19) placed before the Assembly. Let me spell that word out to the Assembly once again: H — A — M — A — S. Hamas. Hamas is the reason for what is happening. Hamas is the reason for the suffering of the Palestinian people. Curiously — but maybe not so curiously because of where this is happening — that word is totally non-existent either in the Palestinian statement or in the draft resolution.

Let me be very clear. The emergency today is most certainly not in this Assembly Hall. It is on the other side of the world, in Israeli cities like Sderot and Ashkelon, where residents are pounded daily by Qassam rockets; and it is in the Gaza Strip, where Palestinian terrorists continue to plan and carry out terror attacks. Ever since Israel left Gaza over one year ago, the Palestinians have cynically — tragically — turned Gaza into a staging ground for the war of terror against Israel.

With the election of Hamas to the Palestinian Authority, the situation deteriorated further. In the last year, over 1,000 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel, 100 in the last month alone — this, I repeat, after Israel left Gaza. All the while, smuggling continues at an alarming rate, with over 30 tons of military-grade weapons illegally entering Gaza. Palestinian terrorists still hold Corporal Gilad Shalit captive following his abduction on 25 June 2006. The Hamas-led Palestinian Government refuses to acknowledge the existence of Israel and pledges every one of its resources, even if it means starving its own people and denying them basic necessities, to maim and kill Jews and destroy the State of Israel. If that is not a state of emergency, please tell me what is.

Although Israel still longs for peace, we sorely feel the painful sting of the current reality: Hamas's campaign of terror, relentless Qassam rockets and venomous hatred of Israel. These days, the Qassam rockets are a part of the southern Israeli skyline. They pierce the tranquil blue skies of the western Negev and plummet down on the civilian population below, onto Israel homes, places of work and schools. They are the ones who target sleeping children, not us, while the member States of this body haggle over this biased text.

Two days ago, an Israeli woman was killed and two others were severely injured by Qassam rockets. While members debated paragraphs, 15 more Qassams came crashing down on the cities of Sderot and Ashkelon. When members agreed on the text, the children of Sderot were already being evacuated from their homes. While we sit here this morning, this grave humanitarian situation escalates. More children are being evacuated and the residents of Sderot flee en masse.

Since the Qassams do not stop, Israel responds in self-defence. During one of these operations 10 days ago, sadly, a tragic incident occurred. In the course of war — and let there be no mistake, the difficult times we are living in indeed constitute a time of war, a war against terror, vicious, indiscriminate terror — incidents unfortunately occur, which Israel deeply regrets.

Israel has since launched a full investigation and offered medical and other assistance to the injured, in coordination with the Palestinian agencies. However, let there be no mistake: these dead Palestinians may have been killed by Israeli shells, but they are the victims of the Palestinian Authority. It is the Palestinian Authority that is directly responsible for their deaths and for the tragedy of its own people.

This bloodshed can stop in one second. If terror stops, there will not be one single victim, Israeli or Palestinian. The choice is yours. End the violence and Israel will never again have to act in self-defence.

Convening this emergency special session is yet another example of Member States' misusing and abusing the procedures of this Assembly. In repeated discussions, they place procedure before substance in a not-so-subtle attempt to circumvent the Security Council. Ultimately, the disproportionate use of procedure raises serious questions on the role this Organization can play in being an honest broker for peace.

Contrary to perception, the Security Council last week did not fail to act. If there is any failure, it is the failure of the resolutions, both in the Security Council and in the Assembly today, to aptly address the origins of the situation. It is a failure to recognize that Israel's response is exactly a legitimate response, that the source of the conflict is the persistent and pernicious Palestinian terror, and that Israel has a right to self-defence. It is a failure to recognize that the Palestinians cannot demand their national rights without fulfilling their national responsibilities.

Convening the emergency special session without that recognition cannot change reality. If we ignore the source of this conflict — Palestinian terror — then our assembling here today is unrealistic, a charade, a complete theatrical farce. Rather than deliberate and forge unrealistic scenarios, the international community must marshal the Palestinian leadership to embrace its responsibilities. The international community can see to it that, instead of pursuing terror, Hamas takes up the mantle of responsibility and fulfils the Quartet's three conditions — recognizing Israel, renouncing violence and abiding by previous agreements — earning it a seat at the table and a place among nations.

As it stands, the debate this morning and in four other bodies of the United Nations dealing with this issue, including the Human Rights Council two days ago, offers the Hamas Government no incentive to renounce their ways of terror. And why should they? They have a monopoly on this Assembly. They have a

monopoly on this Assembly's attention and sympathy. Without forcing the Palestinians to shoulder their responsibilities, there will be no change. Terror will continue and Israel will be compelled to respond in self-defence.

Terror does not merely spring up from nowhere. We all know that extremism and terror in our region are fuelled by Syria and Iran. Last week, we saw this proven again by the Argentinian Government. Syria's and Iran's bloody fingerprints can be found around the globe. This week, a United Nations report tells us that Damascus and Tehran are violating the sanctions against Somalia, sending over large consignments of arms and ammunition. We see once again the frightening reach of the villainous arm of Syria, home to so many terror organizations, including Hamas, with its leader, Khaled Mashal, and Iran, whose President denies the Holocaust while diligently preparing the next one and who is on a quest to acquire the nuclear weapons to do so. Iran has just given Hamas $120 million. Who knows what they will use that money for? The international community must put a stop to their genocidal regime.

Direct negotiations, based on mutual recognition of rights and responsibilities of both sides, are the only mechanism that will bring benefit and progress to the Israeli and Palestinian people. We still have that mechanism, and it is called the Road Map, accepted by Israel and endorsed by the international community. The Road Map and the three international conditions are designed precisely to confront the enemies of peace and to ensure that the future Palestinian State is not a State that sponsors terror.

Discarding those building blocks, as some in Europe have recently called for, will not speed up the process; it will simply ensure that the edifice of peace crumbles. Returning to the Road Map requires acting with urgency but not recklessness. It requires not confusing sessions and speeches with changes in reality. And, most of all, it requires genuine consultation, negotiation and agreement between the parties themselves. There is no other way.

Let me end with a note of caution, a question and an explanation. I caution everyone who will support this draft resolution today: by doing so, you will be accomplices to terror. The blood of more innocents will be on your hands. I urge all of you to ask yourselves: if your country were subject to this brutal and vicious terror, what would you do? If French cities were shelled from across the border, what would the French do? Would the French Government send flowers to their attackers? Well, by voting for this draft resolution and supporting it, you will be sending flowers to the terrorists — flowers which tomorrow will be laid on the grave of yet another Israeli victim.

Finally, because I know that in this Hall, our words fall on mostly deaf ears, my Mission will leave after I make this statement to hold a press conference in this building — at which, hopefully, they will meet with more responsive attention.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on Mr. Paul Badji of Senegal, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*spoke in French*): I should like, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to speak before the General Assembly on the agenda item under consideration. The resumption of the tenth emergency special session is justified by the alarming situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the terrible losses of human life suffered by the civilian population of Beit Hanoun.

During the Security Council meeting held on 9 November 2006 (see S/PV.5564), the overwhelming majority of speakers expressed their indignation at the indiscriminate bombing of residential districts in Beit Hanoun. The operations conducted by the Israeli army in that area, which began on 1 November, killed more than 80 Palestinians, many of them children, women and innocent bystanders. On 8 November alone, 19 Palestinians lost their lives during an attack that took place at dawn, while families were sound asleep in their homes. More than 260 persons were wounded. Beit Hanoun is a devastated area in which some 450 dwellings have been destroyed and where entire families find themselves homeless.

By using excessive force in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli army has committed an act of war against the Palestinian population. The use of tanks, combat helicopters, missiles and artillery against a people under occupation cannot be described in any other way. It is obviously a disproportionate act.

The draft resolution that Qatar submitted to the Security Council (S/2006/878), which received the support of 10 Council members, would have been a way out of the current catastrophic situation. In particular, it would have given the Security Council a central role in international action to resolve this long-standing conflict — a role that, the Committee is firmly convinced, the Council should have been playing all along, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. That draft resolution was not adopted owing to the veto of a permanent Council member.

When I took the floor during the Security Council debate, I condemned in the strongest terms on behalf of the Committee the Israeli incursions into Gaza, the disproportionate use of force and the vast destruction caused by the Israeli heavy artillery. The Committee also urged the Palestinian militants to stop firing Qassam rockets at Israel from the north of the Gaza Strip, which recently caused the death of an Israeli woman and seriously wounded two other persons. Such acts against civilians cannot in any way be justified and do not help to alleviate the situation or create conditions for a resumption of peace negotiations.

Those tragic events reduce to naught the little hope that the Palestinian leadership had of seeking ways to restart dialogue and return to the negotiating table. The Palestinian population, which already lives in miserable conditions, is being subjected to new humiliations and ordeals and is daily obliged to face ever greater dangers. The Israeli operation carried out recently in the Gaza Strip and throughout the West Bank has scarcely caught the attention of the international community. The Palestinians asked it to immediately intervene and were deeply disappointed by what they consider to be passivity, including on the part of the United Nations.

The number of deaths is rising daily, and this tragic situation will continue unless effective measures are taken as soon as possible. We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to all military operations and to the use of force, and to act within the framework of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We urge all parties immediately to put an end to all acts of violence against civilians, to exercise the greatest possible restraint and to ensure that calm is restored. Israel must put an end to its military incursions into Palestinian territory and to extrajudicial executions of Palestinians. It must also lift the harsh restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement and the daily lives of the Palestinian people.

The Committee supports the establishment, under the guidance of the Security Council, of an international mechanism that would protect the Palestinian civilian population. We hope that the international community will take the measures necessary to help eradicate the violence and chaos that daily afflict innocent civilians. We ask members to support the draft resolution that is before the Assembly.

We remain deeply concerned by the decision of some of the main donors to suspend direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Such invaluable aid on the part of the international community has allowed for the basic necessities to be provided to millions of Palestinians. The suspension or re-channelling of such assistance resulted, at a particularly critical time, in considerable upheaval and deprivation in the lives of numerous Palestinians. The Committee asks the international community of donors to help stop the deterioration of the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and to make every effort to ensure that this vital assistance continues to be provided to those who need it most.

Israel, in violation of international law, continues to carry out its illegal policies of expanding and annexing settlements and building the separation wall. Furthermore, such practices deprive the Palestinians of their opportunity to fulfil their legitimate aspiration to a Palestinian State, and give rise to anger, despair and bitterness in the face of a future that appears bleaker every day. The international community will continue to call on Israel to put an end to its policy of illegally appropriating Palestinian lands and of faits accomplis on the ground. The Committee asks the States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take urgent measures to ensure that Israel ends and reverses this illegal process of land usurpation.

As always, the Committee intends to continue to cooperate with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, primarily with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, who advocates non-violence, recognizes the State of Israel and respects all previous Israeli-Palestinian accords. We continue to support his efforts to promote the formation of a Government of national unity.

It is clear that there can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Parties must engage in

dialogue to try to break the cycle of revenge and reprisals, which can only give rise to fresh suffering. The Committee has consistently advocated a negotiated settlement leading to the emergence of an independent, democratic and unified Palestinian State, living side by side, in peace and security, with Israel and other neighbouring States.

A negotiated settlement would allow the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which began in 1967, on the basis of the principles espoused at the Madrid Conference; the principle of land for peace; Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1585 (2005); previous agreements concluded between the parties; and the Arab Peace Initiative. It would make Israel a fully fledged neighbour, living in peace and security with all other States in the region. Such a comprehensive settlement is the only way of enabling the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Non-Aligned Movement considers the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly fully justified and very timely. The grave situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories warrants the priority attention of all delegations.

As is well known, last Saturday, 11 November, a permanent member of the Security Council vetoed a balanced draft resolution submitted by the delegation of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group on the situation of the occupied Palestinian territories. As a result, the text could not be adopted, despite having received favourable votes from the majority of members of the Council, including all the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are currently members of that organ.

Given the Security Council's paralysis as a result of the abuse of the veto and its inability to exercise its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and against the backdrop of the worsening situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Non-Aligned Movement considered it not only its legitimate right but also its duty formally to convene last Wednesday, 15 November, this session of the General Assembly.

In requesting this meeting, the Non-Aligned Movement acted in keeping with its position that in cases in which the Security Council has not fulfilled its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly must take appropriate measures, in accordance with the Charter, to resolve the question.

By convening this important meeting, the General Assembly is playing the role and exercising the authority inherent to it with regard to the issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, as set out in Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement is hopeful that, as a result of this meeting, the General Assembly will adopt without delay recommendations on concrete collective measures, in the context of resolution 377 A (V), in order to put an end to Israel's actions and address the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Israel, the occupying Power, has in the past few weeks continued to escalate its military aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

As a result of the actions of the Israeli forces in Beit Hanoun on Wednesday, 8 November, at least 19 Palestinians — eight children and seven women among them — lost their lives while they where sleeping in their homes. Moreover, 55 people were injured. That incident occurred after an entire week of Israeli military operations in northern Gaza. The events in Beit Hanoun are unfortunately just further proof of what the Palestinian people have suffered for too many years as a result of the illegal occupation of their territory by Israel, the occupying Power.

According to the World Health Organization, from 1 to 8 November alone, 82 Palestinians lost their lives during the operations that took place in Gaza. The death toll was 21 children, 12 women and 49 men. Furthermore, 260 Palestinians were injured. Since late June, more than 450 Palestinians have died in the Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses once again its grave concern at the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in recent days, particularly as a result of the excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by Israel, the occupying Power, which has caused extensive loss of Palestinian civilian lives and injuries. The Movement condemns in particular the military assaults carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in

the Gaza Strip, which have caused loss of life and extensive destruction of Palestinian property and vital infrastructure. The Movement also condemns the killing of many Palestinian civilians, including children and women, by Israel, the occupying Power, that took place in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its grave concern at the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and calls for the provision of emergency assistance to Palestine. In light of the present situation, the Movement urges the General Assembly to act by taking the following measures.

First, it demands that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease its aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and immediately withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip to the positions held prior to June 2006.

Second, it calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities between the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

Third, it requests the Secretary-General to establish a fact-finding mission on the attack that took place in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006 and to report back to the General Assembly within 30 days.

Fourth, it calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to scrupulously abide by its obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War of 12 August 1949 in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Fifth, it stresses the urgency of ensuring that medical and humanitarian organizations be granted unhindered access to the Palestinian civilian population at all times and of allowing the severely injured speedy evacuation from the occupied Palestinian territory for needed treatment.

Sixth, it calls on the international community, including the Quartet, to take immediate steps to stabilize the situation and restart the peace process, including through the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of the civilian populations.

Seventh, it stresses the importance of and the need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab peace initiative adopted by the League of Arab States summit in March 2002 in Beirut, and the Road Map.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms the permanent responsibility of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, in the question of Palestine, so long as it remains unresolved in all its aspects on the basis of international law. That includes a just solution to the difficult situation of the refugees, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to support the Palestinian people and its leadership in bringing an end to the Israeli occupation begun in 1967, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We ratify our unswerving commitment to a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the Palestinian people's right to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in its independent State of Palestine, taking as a basis the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I would like to conclude by calling upon all Member States to support the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.19, submitted for consideration at this meeting.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): For the record, I should like to state that Azerbaijan, on behalf of the group of States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the United Nations, in its letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly, being issued as document A/ES-10/369, supported the request made by the Group of Arab States to reconvene the tenth emergency special session.

I am addressing the General Assembly today at its resumed tenth emergency special session in my capacity as the current Chairman of the OIC group at the United Nations on the issue of illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. This special session is particularly important in view of the Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip and the killing of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun that took place on 8 November 2006.

The OIC group at the United Nations is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Palestinian territory. The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel, the occupying Power — particularly its recent aggressions in Beit Hanoun and Yamoun village, which led to extensive loss of civilian Palestinian lives, mainly women and children, and the ongoing military assaults carried out in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, which have caused extensive destruction of vital infrastructure of the Palestinian people — are severe developments that need to be addressed by the international community.

The dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people calls for the provision of emergency assistance to them. The situation should also prompt the international community, including the Quartet, to take immediate and serious steps to develop confidence-building measures between the parties involved by bringing them back to the negotiating table to revive the peace process in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council.

In that regard, as the Chairman of the OIC group at the United Nations, I would like to state that the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIC member States will convene an emergency session on Saturday 18 November 2006 at OIC headquarters in Jeddah to examine the repercussions of the serious escalation of aggressions committed in the Palestinian territories. They will consider ways and means to extend the necessary support to the Palestinian people in facing the Israeli assaults, as well as the coordination of the Islamic position on the international scene.

In my capacity as the current Chairman of the OIC Group, I would like to state that the Group supports draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19. The ongoing deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian territory and the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel have caused and will continue to cause extensive loss of civilian life and destruction of property there if no immediate step is taken to put an end to the aggression.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to emphasize that while we can leave it to history to pronounce its judgment on the outcome of our joint efforts to help bring peace and stability to the region as a whole, and to the people of Palestine in particular, the difficulties of our times place heavy burdens and common responsibilities on our shoulders today. The OIC Group at the United Nations urges the international community, including the Quartet, to shoulder its responsibility towards Palestinian people by taking urgent steps to stabilize the situation, resume the peace negotiations and restart the peace process with the hope of preserving international peace and security, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): Madam President, let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to you for convening this emergency special session. It is timely and important to consider the serious developments in the occupied Palestinian territory and their implications for our efforts to resume the peace process in the Middle East.

In this regard, my delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

This meeting follows the tragic killing of innocent Palestinians in Beit Hanoun, most of them children and women, in a single attack by Israeli forces last week. A total of 82 Palestinians were killed in the operations in one week. Words cannot describe the horror of the brutal Israeli military operations and the deliberate attacks on unarmed civilians. My delegation condemns those actions in the strongest terms.

Once again, the hopes of Palestinians and peacelovers in the Middle East that the Security Council would adopt a resolution faithful to the facts on the ground were thwarted. My delegation expresses its deep regret and dissatisfaction about the Council's failure to adopt the balanced draft resolution, a failure that is bound to inflame the sensibilities of Palestinians while suggesting insensitivity on the part of the United Nations.

This failure of the Security Council — the second time this year in similar circumstances — can only send the message that the international community condones Israel's aggression and policy of terror and its collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The persistent defiance of international law by Israel will only strengthen the growing global sentiment that justice does not apply when it comes to the question of Palestine. That situation could fuel the kind of hatred

that radical groups easily exploit for their own benefit, thereby strengthening the cycle of violence.

Obviously, this does not help to nurture trust among the parties to the conflict or the efforts to revive the peace process. In the interest of reflecting the true views of Member States, whom this Assembly best represents, this meeting is therefore of the utmost necessity if a just peace in the Middle East is ever to be achieved. The implication of Israel's exercise of its military muscle is that the entire peace agenda for the Middle East is endangered. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and the area is poised to return to full-scale conflict.

It is the Security Council's failure to adopt the resolution last week that now forces us to confront this scenario, and not for the first time. We call upon the General Assembly, therefore, to condemn Israel's actions and to take the necessary action to correct the situation by upholding relevant international law. We believe that action by the General Assembly, in view of the lack of agreement in the Security Council, could lead to alternative ways for the international community to halt and prevent widespread violence in the region and to deliver speedy humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

Indonesia believes that we must move forward to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East on the basis of the road map of the Quartet, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant United Nations resolutions. To do this, it is necessary that the Assembly call on Israel to set aside its aggression and its unrelenting military incursions as a tool of coercion or intimidation. Israel must stop its premeditated military tactics against the Palestinian people and immediately withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip. Israel must halt its disproportionate use of force and military operations that are clearly in flagrant violation of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and humanitarian and human rights law.

We fully believe that destroying civil infrastructure and inflicting indiscriminate attacks on civilians cannot be justified. Through these brutal acts, Israel seems determined to intimidate and humiliate the Palestinians in a vain attempt to consign them to perpetual subjugation and occupation.

At the same time, the Palestinians must take immediate and sustained action to bring an end to violence, including the firing of rockets into Israeli territory, as such violence will only be used as a pretext for Israel's continued collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

It is also the responsibility of the international community to support the protection of Palestinians and the preservation of their institutions. The international community and the Quartet must intervene to ensure that this desperate situation is brought under control, humanitarian assistance provided and the peace process revived.

My delegation is pleased to observe positive developments in the efforts to form a united Palestinian Government. We hope that the formation of the coalition Government will pave the way for the alleviation of the dire humanitarian situation that has been inflicted on the Palestinians because of the exercise of their democratic right to choose.

Finally, the Road Map was plotted to lead to a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution whereby an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State lives side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. That objective was originally scheduled to be achieved by 2005. With the support and active encouragement of the international community, this process must be put back on the table.

The reality is that we cannot set out on this road again unless Israel changes its violent and militaristic policies. Those policies contradict the pursuit of peace in the region. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to bring this message home to Israel in the strongest language available. My delegation therefore fully supports the draft resolution that is before the Assembly.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia is committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict underpinned by a peaceful, negotiated settlement between Israel and Palestinian representatives. Australia supports a two-State solution that recognizes the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and Israel's right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Australia shares the international community's concern over the escalation in violence since the

kidnapping of Corporal Shalit by Palestinian militants from Gaza in June and over the increasing number of casualties in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. Australia calls on all sides to exercise utmost restraint and to avoid actions which lead to further violence or have an adverse humanitarian effect on the civilian population.

Australia recognizes that Israel has a right to defend itself against terrorist attacks. Israel Defense Force incursions have taken place in response to ongoing rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. It is vital that the rocket attacks cease, in the interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

The resumption of this emergency special session, in our view, does not assist the cause of peace in the Middle East. We encourage the General Assembly to act responsibly and to address the issues in a balanced and even-handed way. Australia is concerned that the proliferation of resolutions on the Middle East, particularly in special sessions, and the singling out of one side only for blame in a complex situation will do nothing to advance the cause of peace.

Only a return to the peace process and progress towards a two-State solution will permit an easing of the current critical situation in the Palestinian territories. A key to any revival in the Middle East peace process will be for the Palestinian Government to renounce violence and recognize Israel.

Australia, with the international community, has always stood ready to support the peace process. In recent months, there has been renewed commitment by some key players to resuming consultations, including by Arab States. Australia strongly supports continued international efforts for peace and will look for practical ways to contribute to new initiatives as they emerge.

For any initiative to succeed, it will need the cooperation of the parties involved. We strongly urge Israelis and Palestinians alike to work together and, with the support of the international community, to bring about a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Despite the efforts of the international community, the situation in the Palestinian territories and the entire Middle East region remains very unstable. The tragic incident in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006 demonstrated that it is again civilians who are the main victims of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian confrontation.

The situation is unacceptable not only from the perspective of the strict compliance of all sides with international humanitarian law. The deaths of innocent people undermine faith in a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is in the common interests of all members of the international community — including, we are convinced, Israel and Palestine — not to allow fatalism and desperation to take root, as they will inevitably fuel terrorism and extremism.

Urgent, practical steps must be taken to break the crisis in Palestinian-Israeli relations. The Israelis and the Palestinians ought finally to show their political will, stop the violence and resume the negotiation process. We need collectively to clear the field for the Palestinian-Israeli dialogue instead of hindering its progress. That course has no reasonable alternative.

However dramatically the situation in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority unfolds, emotions should not take over. It is important to concentrate on concrete measures in support of the efforts of the international mediators, above all those of the Quartet, aimed at resuming Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and at normalizing the situation in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority and around it. Russia proceeds from the need to convene an urgent meeting of the Quartet at the ministerial level. If the meeting is to be fruitful, we should welcome the participation of the leading Arab States of the region, and, if possible, the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The Government of Israel bears great responsibility for preventing a further destabilization of the situation in the region. Its right and obligation to protect the lives and security of its citizens is not in question. However, that responsibility should not be met at the cost of harsh consequences for Palestinian civilians by violating, even unintentionally, international humanitarian law and standards. The disproportionate and excessive use of force should end. Otherwise, the vicious circle of violence will not be broken.

In their turn, the leaders of the Palestinian National Authority should take resolute measures to rein in the extremists, including suppressing the launch of Qassam rockets into Israeli territory, which provokes the Israeli authorities to respond by force. With adequate international support, the leaders of the

Palestinian National Authority should establish and maintain public order in the territory under its control.

Russia actively contributed to a generally balanced draft resolution to be submitted to the Security Council that would substantively reflect the situation and the steps necessary to improve it. Unfortunately, it was not possible to adopt such a draft resolution.

The Russian delegation has also contributed to the positive evolution of the draft resolution before the General Assembly in document A/ES-10/L.19. Russia will support its adoption and continue in every possible way to promote an equitable and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and a settlement in the Middle East in general on the basis of Security Council resolutions, the Madrid conference understandings, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Mohammad (Malaysia): Let me begin by associating myself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Senegal on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. My delegation endorses the statements delivered by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and by the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Malaysia strongly condemns the killings by Israel of defenceless Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun on 8 November and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory. Malaysia considers deliberate and planned military aggression against the Palestinian people, which is characterized by excessive and indiscriminate use of force, as clearly reflecting Israel's continued and blatant disregard for innocent human lives. In doing so, Israel, with its State terrorism apparatus, has repeatedly committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity which violate international law and numerous Security Council resolutions. Contrary to the arguments made by Israel, lasting peace can never be achieved if it continues to commit those acts under the pretext of combating terrorism.

We are compelled to meet here today as a result of the inability of the Security Council to take action on this issue. In this regard, Malaysia is extremely disappointed at the negative vote that was cast by the United States in the Security Council on 11 November on the draft resolution (S/2006/878) concerning the latest developments in Gaza. We believe that that action has, in effect, given Israel carte blanche to continue to commit such atrocities with impunity, which, in turn, is detrimental to efforts to revive the stalled Middle East peace process. In contrast, we highly commend those Security Council members which, cognizant of their Charter responsibility, voted in favour of the text, thereby signifying that they attach importance to upholding international law and protecting the lives of innocent human beings.

My delegation continues to recognize the important role of the members of the diplomatic Quartet. The Road Map which they painstakingly drafted had provided a real — although unfortunately fleeting — hope for peace. Three years have gone by since it came into existence — years of death, destruction and despair on both sides. Given the current situation on the ground and the steadily deteriorating overall situation in the region, it appears that the Road Map has been deliberately asphyxiated by Israel, clearly a Power mightier than the Quartet members combined. Efforts to put the Road Map back on track have apparently been an exercise in futility. It would seem that putting Israel in the driver's seat has done nothing but ensure that the Road Map leads nowhere.

My delegation shares the frustration of the international community, particularly Palestine and its Arab neighbours, at the lack of progress in finding a solution to the conflict. We therefore call upon the international community to generate collectively a new approach towards the protracted Palestine-Israeli conflict, bearing in mind the need to resolve it within the larger framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In that connection, my delegation supports the call by the League of Arab States for a new Middle East peace conference. Malaysia is ready to contribute to that process in order to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict. Furthermore, this effort must place the United Nations at its core. Unlike its role in the Quartet, we believe that the United Nations should not merely play a subservient role in the envisaged process, bearing in mind its permanent responsibility in seeking to comprehensively resolve the question of Palestine in all its aspects.

While serious efforts to resuscitate the Middle East peace process are under way, my delegation reiterates that we must immediately establish an

international mechanism to protect the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, as called for in paragraph 8 of the draft resolution before us in document A/ES-10/L.19. We believe that, given the current circumstances of heightened tension, only the forcible separation of the two sides to the conflict would provide the necessary peace and security to enable the resumption of negotiations aimed at a political settlement.

Let me conclude by appealing to those States with influence in the Middle East to do their utmost to stop violence from spiralling out of control and not to allow the conflict to remain unresolved indefinitely, for the sake of Palestinians and Israelis alike and for the sake of peace and security in the region and of humanity at large.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union expresses its deep concern at the escalating violence in Gaza and the West Bank. We strongly deplore the Israeli military action in Gaza, resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties, including women and children, as well as the unacceptable military operation in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006. We deeply regret the growing number of civilian casualties, many of them children, as well as the destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure. The European Union calls on Israel to cease its military operations that endanger the Palestinian civilian population in the Palestinian territory.

While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, the European Union urges Israel to exercise the utmost restraint, and underlines that action should not be disproportionate or in contradiction to international humanitarian law. It is also imperative that the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people be urgently alleviated.

The European Union also strongly deplores the firing of rockets into Israeli territory and calls on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to such acts. We deplore the loss of an Israeli life in a Qassam rocket attack in Sderot on Wednesday. The deterioration of the situation will only aggravate the already grave circumstances in the region, where a return to a comprehensive peace process with a clear political perspective is urgently needed. To achieve this, an immediate cessation of violence is needed.

The European Union repeats its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier. We also repeat our call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel.

The European Union urges the Palestinians to work for national unity and to form a government with a platform reflecting the Quartet principles and allowing for early engagement. Such a government of national unity would also be a partner for the international community in support of the relaunching of the peace process.

The European Union reaffirms its intention to actively contribute to the work within the Quartet to get the Middle East peace process urgently back on track in order to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement on the basis of the Road Map, relevant Security Council resolutions and the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2005. This should be done in close cooperation with Arab partners. The international community must provide its full support to the parties in this respect.

The European Union underlines the necessity of a political perspective and the reinvigoration of the peace process through the relaunching of negotiations. The European Union underlines the importance of preserving and strengthening the capacity of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority in order to support the objective of a future, independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State based on the rule of law.

The European Union reaffirms that it will not recognize any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties. We recall the urgent need to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European Union underlines that it will actively continue its efforts to that end.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand is gravely concerned about the deepening crisis in Gaza, culminating in the terrible loss of life we have seen over recent weeks. The situation confronting Palestinian civilians is dire and must be urgently addressed.

Despite the kidnapping of Corporal Shalit and the repeated rocket attacks on Israeli territory, we cannot accept the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force we have seen from the Israeli military in response. There is no justification for those violations of international humanitarian law, on one side or the other.

The futile cycle of reciprocal violence currently under way underscores the fact that there is no military solution to this conflict. We call on the parties to take immediate steps to restore stability and to create an environment in which peace is possible. In particular, we consider that there is an urgent need to restore the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to govern and exert control on its side of the border. We welcome moves to put in place a national unity government for the occupied Palestinian territories and stress that Israel and the international community must work urgently with the Palestinian Authority to restore access and the flow of resources to the occupied Palestinian territories, without which any attempt at effective governance is doomed to failure. We also call for the release of Palestinian officials detained by Israel.

For its part, the restored Palestinian Authority must take action to prevent further rocket attacks on Israel as soon as possible and intervene with the kidnappers of Corporal Shalit to help secure his release.

We hope that such steps will contribute to a stabilization and truce, providing space for a return to calm. Over the longer term, a radical change of current attitudes and expectations on the part of both Israel and the Palestinians will be necessary if they are to negotiate a lasting peace.

Mr. Maqungo (South Africa): My delegation wishes to associate itself with and support the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in favour of the draft resolution that will be put before the Assembly.

The South African Government is deeply concerned at the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. The recent attacks in Gaza have clearly raised tensions in the region to new and dangerous heights at a time when all sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be looking at ways to end the negotiation deadlock and move the peace process forward.

The increase in violence is threatening regional and international peace and security, and we urge the General Assembly to act decisively and take urgent action to resolve this conflict. The draft resolution to be submitted to the Assembly helps us meet this responsibility on the part of the United Nations.

My delegation reiterates its position that no party should take any unilateral action aimed at predetermining issues that can be resolved only through negotiation. We call on the Israeli Government to refrain from this type of action and, as a major military Power in the region, to act with restraint to avoid further civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure. We respect the right of a country to protect itself, but there can be no justification for the excessive actions of the Israeli Government.

Equally, we call on the Palestinians to stop firing rockets into Israel. The only lesson we have been able to learn from such retaliatory actions over the past decade is that they give rise to more violence.

The United Nations has been seized of this matter for more than 40 years. Its failure to find a lasting solution to this crisis is also a failure to give hope to the people of Palestine. If we fail to give such hope, the peoples of the region will believe that they have no other recourse but to engage in more violence and counter-violence. It is of concern that every time progress is made towards forming a government of national unity in Palestine, Israel intensifies its aggression, endangering the progress made.

We urge the Palestinian people not to allow themselves to be diverted by such provocative actions from their objective of forming a government of national unity. In that regard, the international community must accept its responsibility and relaunch the peace process.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for the establishment of an independent State

of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel, with both States enjoying secure and internationally recognized borders. That vision of a two-State solution, as enshrined in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace, must therefore underpin any permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My country is deeply concerned about developments in the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel. We are witnessing yet another dangerous spiral of violence and retaliation, taking place in a difficult economic, social and humanitarian environment. We regret that the Security Council has not been able to reach a political decision on the issue. The Human Rights Council also addressed the issue at a special session on Wednesday. In the future, it would be desirable for the main United Nations bodies to act in a concerted fashion.

In view of recent events on the ground, we would like to stress three points.

First, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War applies in all territories occupied by Israel. The rules of international humanitarian law apply to all parties to a conflict.

Secondly, respect for and implementation of the law are not subject to negotiation. The State of Israel has a special responsibility as much from the perspective of the law itself as with regard to the methods it uses and the actions it takes. That responsibility implies respect for the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution by Israel in the context of its military operations. Switzerland regrets the fact that Israel did not take all the required precautions in accordance with international humanitarian law during its military action in Beit Hanoun on 8 November, which caused the deaths of 19 people, almost all of them women and children. Switzerland has taken due note, in that context, of the opening by Israel of an inquiry to determine the causes of the tragedy. Furthermore, Switzerland considers that all acts of violence committed by armed Palestinian groups against the Israeli civilian population — in particular the Qassam rocket attacks on Israeli territory, which killed a civilian in Sderot on 15 November — constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, the protection of the civilian population must be given the highest priority by all. It is incumbent on all parties to live up to their responsibility to distinguish between civilians and combatants. The same applies to the necessary distinction between civil and military infrastructures. The personnel, infrastructures and means of transport of impartial humanitarian organizations must be protected and their activities facilitated by all parties to the conflict.

Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is an essential precondition for a resumption of the peace process. The only reasonable way forward is that of political dialogue, and the international community must commit to it as early as possible. In that respect, it is essential to support President Abbas in his efforts to form a Palestinian government of national unity.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): The United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international legitimacy.

The reconvening of this emergency special session is a recognition of the fact that the failure of the Security Council to discharge its responsibilities on behalf of all the Member States does not relieve Member States of their obligations, or the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly, of its responsibility under the Charter with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It also reaffirms that the discharge by the General Assembly of its responsibilities in those respects calls for possibilities of observation that would ascertain the facts and expose aggressors, and for the possibility of the timely recommendation by the General Assembly to Members of the United Nations for collective action which, to be effective, should be prompt.

The illegal Israeli actions, including indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force in the occupied Palestinian territories — particularly the escalation in Gaza recently, including the killing of innocent children and women in Beit Hanoun on 8 November — are acts of such gravity that they cannot leave the collective conscience of the international community unmoved. It is no wonder there is widespread condemnation of those acts and calls for an end to the impunity enjoyed by Israel.

There is a universal demand for respect for international human rights and international humanitarian law. In the face of those atrocities, sympathy, solidarity and support for the Palestinian people remain universal and stronger than ever.

It is unfortunate that the Security Council has persistently failed to respond to loud and clear calls for action, including those made recently by many of us at its meeting on 9 November. But while the Security Council has not risen to the challenge, the United Nations should.

On 15 November, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the human rights violations emanating from Israeli military incursions in the occupied territories, including the assault in Beit Hanoun, and decided to dispatch urgently a high-level fact-finding mission. Today, the General Assembly is shouldering its responsibilities.

Pakistan fully supports the statements of the representatives of Cuba and Azerbaijan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), respectively. The OIC foreign ministers are meeting tomorrow in Jeddah to chart out a collective response to the situation, including the provision of necessary support to our Palestinian sisters and brothers.

We support the call for an immediate ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territories that is credible, sustainable and verifiable. Pakistan also supports the request to the Secretary-General to establish a fact-finding mission on the Beit Hanoun attack and to report to the Assembly within 30 days. The independent investigation should also look into the implications of that incident for the violation of international humanitarian law.

Beyond those immediate measures and provision of humanitarian assistance, the international community should renew efforts for a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East. That strategic objective was underlined in the penultimate paragraph of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which brought an end to the recent conflict in Lebanon. The same vision is also contained in the draft resolution now under consideration by this Assembly, and which we support.

The events in the occupied Palestinian territories have global reverberations. President Musharraf has stated that the greatest challenge to global security, to the campaign against terrorism, to the promotion of harmony among civilizations, and to the credibility of the United Nations is the cauldron of conflict that is the Middle East. We must address all the festering problems of the region comprehensively and fairly. It is time, first and foremost, to end the tragedy of Palestine, which is the core of the Middle East conflict and the major source of anger that is felt by many people throughout the Muslim world.

Pakistan remains steadfast in support of the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, self-determination and a viable, sovereign and independent Palestinian State. The basic framework and elements of a solution are already there: in the previous agreements; the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); the principle of land for peace; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the Road Map.

The calls for a ceasefire and a resumption of the peace process should be heeded. To that end, Pakistan would again urge the two sides, Israel and the Palestinians, to take a series of immediate and simultaneous confidence-building measures.

Israel should immediately end its military campaign in Gaza; release Palestinian prisoners, including Cabinet members and legislators; remove checkpoints and other obstacles to facilitate the access and movement of civilians and humanitarian workers; halt and reverse the construction of the separation wall; freeze settlement activities; release customs and value-added-tax payments to the Palestinian Authority; and accept negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas.

We also appeal to the Palestinian side to halt the rocket attacks and violence, to secure the release of the captured Israeli soldier and to achieve internal cohesion. We hope that the ongoing efforts to establish a national unity government will be fruitful.

Those confidence-building measures should lead to early negotiations, with the support — and, as necessary, the intercession — of the Security Council, the Secretary-General, the Quartet and all others able and willing to assist.

We understand that these are difficult issues, but their solutions are not beyond the capacity of

diplomacy and ingenuity. What is required is a commitment to peace, political will on the part of all to move forward and a fair and impartial supporting role to be played by the international community. The Security Council also has a golden opportunity to silence its critics by playing such a role.

It is a reality that each passing day of violence and reprisals is a setback to the quest for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question and for durable peace in the Middle East. There is also another important reality: that durable solutions cannot be imposed by force or unilateral actions. We must therefore restore the hope for peace and pave the way for dialogue and negotiations. That is the larger message that should emanate from today's meetings.

Mr. Chaderton-Matos (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Cuba in his capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the Middle East region constitutes one of the greatest moral debts of the international community, and in particular of the United Nations. The Organization was established with the mandate of ensuring international peace and security and compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the norms of coexistence of the community of nations.

Last August, the Security Council adopted with curious rapidity two resolutions aimed at preventing alleged potential threats to international peace and security, but waited four weeks to take action on the real and grave situation in Lebanon. Those four weeks of astonishing inaction by the United Nations made it possible to carry out a massacre of the civilian population and the destruction of installations, infrastructure and other targets, including civilian targets. More recently, we witnessed how new violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, such as the 8 November 2006 massacre at Beit Hanoun, were again shielded by the power of the veto.

This convening of the tenth emergency special session demonstrates to us once again the need to democratize the Organization. It is a clear exercise in the revitalization of the General Assembly. The use of the veto has no standing in this forum, but it certainly did in the case of the draft resolution voted upon last Saturday, 11 November 2006, in the Security Council.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its firmest support for the Human Rights Council's condemnation on 15 November 2006 of the massacre of Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun and Gaza, the establishment of a high-level mission and the actions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, in relation to the Palestinian situation. We reaffirm the provisions of Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1, which condemns the systematic human rights violations committed in Lebanon by the unrestrained militarist elite of the State of Israel, and we demand respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention and its two Additional Protocols relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

Our country rejects the use of violence as an instrument to resolve conflicts. Indeed, self-defence and proportionality are not unrelated legal concepts: the first is a reason for justification, and the second is an element of the first. There can be no self-defence without proportionality. Therefore, if excesses are committed in the course of defensive action, then the use of force ceases to be legitimate and becomes aggression unrelated to any previous act.

Accordingly, my delegation fully agrees with the statement dated 9 November 2006 by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (A/61/572, annex). We have no doubt that draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, introduced today, will have the support of the international community and will be a voice crying out in the midst of passive complicit silence — a voice demanding the right to life, of which the victims of Beit Hanoun were deprived.

The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that the right to life is an inalienable right that has been enshrined in our national constitution from the beginning. The Organization is called upon to respect and defend that right. All of us, without any distinction as to race, religion or political ideology, must comply with and ensure respect for the norms of international law defending the right to life of Palestinians, Israelis, Lebanese, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, atheists and all other citizens of the planet, because it is not by accident or chance that we have all signed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

With regard to tolerance and coexistence, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Before 1492, 500 years ago, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in peace as brothers in Al-Andalus, Spain and Sepharat. Those were three names describing the same country, used by Muslims, Christians and Jews, respectively. Perverse historical developments resulted in tragic and abominable distortions such as anti-Semitism and the Holocaust — fundamentally European and Christian phenomena. Here, it should be recalled that the Jewish diaspora after 1492 found refuge and protection in Christian countries such as the Netherlands and in Muslim countries such as Turkey, Syria and Iran.

More than 60 years ago, Jewish victims of Nazi barbarism received the courageous protection of King Mohammed V of Morocco. Thus, the time has come for collective and democratic reflection so as to put an end to the incremental holocaust carried out against the Palestinian people.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): Japan is deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East concerning Palestine and Israel, in particular the continuation of the rocket attacks by Palestinian military groups and the recent military operations by the Israel Defense Forces, which have taken a heavy toll, including the loss of innocent civilian lives.

The situation in Palestine is now at a critical juncture. Restoring the hope of the Palestinian people, advancing peace and helping them to realize their aspirations require, more than anything else, the prevention of a further aggravation of the situation and an end to the vicious cycle of violence. Japan strongly calls upon all parties concerned, foremost among them Israel and Palestine, to exercise maximum restraint.

Japan strongly deplores the fact that the Israeli military action in Beit Hanoun on 8 November caused many new civilian casualties. It is likewise deplorable that Israeli civilians were killed or injured by the Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian military groups on 15 November. Those attacks cannot be justified. We express our condolences to the families of all of the victims. The increasing violence, as manifested in those attacks, is not only a worrying development from the humanitarian perspective; we are also concerned that it may have a negative impact on the chances for dialogue, at a time when serious efforts have been made for the formation of a new Palestinian government.

Japan recognizes that the Government of Israel has the right and the obligation to protect its citizens. However, the Government of Israel should avoid any actions which may lead to civilian casualties. We also hope that the Government of Israel will make serious efforts to expeditiously determine the causes of the incident in Beit Hanoun and to prevent the recurrence of such a tragic incident through the activities of the investigatory panel established within the Israel Defense Forces.

Japan urges the Government of the Palestinian Authority to take appropriate measures to put an immediate end to the violence by Palestinian extremist groups, including rocket attacks against Israel. We also demand that Palestinian military groups halt the violence.

I wish to provide assurances that Japan, under the new Government led by Prime Minister Abe, will continue to address the Middle East process proactively and constructively. That message was conveyed to the high-level officials concerned in Israel, Palestine and Syria when Mr. Tatsuo Arima, Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East peace process, visited the region last week. Mr. Arima also encouraged the parties to make further and more positive efforts for the promotion of peace in the Middle East.

Japan renews its call upon the Palestinian Authority to bring about the safe return of the Israeli soldier abducted in June. We also call upon Israel to release the Palestinian ministers and others held in custody.

Japan strongly hopes that the recent efforts for the establishment of a new Palestinian government will continue. With a view to breaking the current stalemate, we urge Palestinians to find ways to overcome their differences and support a new government of the Palestinian Authority which will renew its efforts to achieve coexistence and mutual prosperity with Israel. We expect that Israel will support the efforts of President Abbas aimed at achieving a breakthrough. If a new government of the Palestinian Authority makes it clear that it will pursue the realization of peace through peaceful negotiation with Israel, the international community should actively extend support for such a policy.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation among Palestinians is a matter of deep concern to our

Government. We re-emphasize that it is important that the international community, including Israel, continue to provide the needed assistance in order to address this situation. In this regard, we stress that an early resumption by the Israeli Government of the transfer of tax and customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority, as well as the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access, concluded in November 2005, are matters of the utmost priority.

For our part, we have been steadily implementing our pledge of $25 million in humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, made upon the visit of former Prime Minister Koizumi to Palestine in July. At the same time, we are making efforts aimed at the creation of a corridor for peace and prosperity, which aims at facilitating coexistence and mutual prosperity between Israel and Palestine in the mid to long term, through consultations among Government representatives of the four parties concerned, including Jordan. We have dispatched a study mission to the region, and we are making efforts to realize this plan. Japan, as a long-standing major donor to Palestinians, will make every effort to continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people.

Japan reiterates the importance of achieving and the need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the League of Arab States at the Beirut Summit in March 2002 and the Road Map.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to cooperate with the international community in achieving the mitigation of tensions and the restoration of stability in the region.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.